


v.59, no. 4 (Aug / Sep 2008)

# SACRED JOURNEY



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THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2008

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# SACRED JOURNEY<sup>®</sup>

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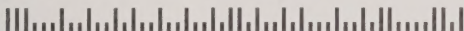
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# C O N T E N T S

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Cover: Taizé, France. Courtesy of the Office of Catholic Youth,  
Archdiocese of Toronto.

## Looking for the Light

Janet M. Haag



Some years ago while on a retreat at a center nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, I decided to wake up early to watch the sunrise. I am not a regular early morning riser so this prospect held a certain novelty. In the pre-dawn darkness, I carefully wound my way up the mountain, armed with flashlight, journal and a substantial mug of coffee. Finding a comfortable spot, I settled in, watching the sky attentively, waiting for the sun's glorious appearance. Gradually, light overtook the darkness and I was puzzled since I had not yet caught a glimpse of the sun. Turning around, I discovered why—the sun was already well into the sky—behind me! All the while, I had been looking in the wrong direction. If God and/or the universe possess a sense of humor, a hearty laugh must have been enjoyed then at my expense!

I recall reading somewhere once that, "Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want." Following my sunrise experience, I realize that we often don't find what we are searching for because we are so preoccupied with the task itself. How easily we can miss

*Janet M. Haag is Managing Director of Fellowship in Prayer.*

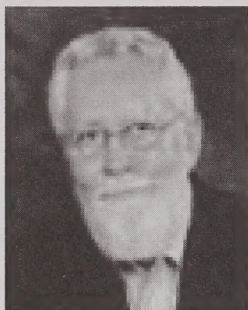
the joy, the beauty, the goodness right in front of us because we have directed our attention elsewhere. How important it is on occasion to lay aside, even our most worthwhile pursuits, to re-discover the delicate balance of living in the moment. Father Ed Hays writes, "The world is saturated with Divine Mystery . . . we and God are intimately one in a continuous communion called life." This reality is certainly not dependent on our awareness but we are greatly enriched and deeply challenged when we are so aware.

In the weeks ahead, as you set aside time to read and reflect on this issue of *SACRED JOURNEY*, may you be open to gentle wake-up calls to take notice of where the sun, any source of light, is rising in your life, and may you carry that light with you, wherever you go, whatever you do.



# COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

## An Interview with Ed Hays



*Fr. Edward Hays, a Roman Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, has written more than 30 books on prayer and spirituality, many of which include his original sketches. It was 35 years ago that Fr. Hays first made a prayer pilgrimage around the world, going through Rome, Jerusalem, India and Tibet to deepen his personal prayer life before returning to Kansas to found Shantivanam, a house of prayer. Fr. Hays believes, "we should all aspire to mysticism, a genuine experience of God emerging from the core of our own existence." He writes with a light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek style, inviting his readers to realize that even the mundane moments of life can be lived prayerfully. One of his most popular books, *Prayers for the Domestic Church*, was recently re-issued by Ave Maria Press and his newest book is entitled *Chasing Joy: Musings on Life in a Bittersweet World*. Fellowship in Prayer was fortunate to speak with Fr. Hays and to be able now to share with you his insight that we can "pray always."*

**Fellowship in Prayer:** In your most recent book, *Chasing Joy—Musings on Life in a Bittersweet World*, you describe "living joyfully" as "uninterrupted prayer." Describe how you see joy and prayer as so inextricably linked.

**Ed Hays:** Since childhood we have been conditioned to imagine praying as having a beginning and an end, as



when thinking, "I'll attend to that after I finish my prayers." The "amen" at the end of a meal prayer both signals the end of praying and "it's time to eat." So the concept of continuous prayer is typically relegated to cloistered monks and nuns who are seen as praying without interruption around the clock. In strict religious orders of many of the world's religions, meals are eaten in silence, so as not to interrupt their prayerful state.

Your imagination formed in childhood retains an image-idea of what constitutes praying, an image that varies from one person to another depending upon personal religious tradition. What is secular activity for some is for others sacred and prayerful – dancing, for example. Native Americans, Sufi devotees of Islam, and ancient tribal religions are among those people and traditions that use dancing as prayer. To live prayerfully requires expanding your concepts of praying so that they are all-inclusive, beyond the expressions of prayer you are accustomed to in your church, synagogue, or mosque. To experience living prayerfully consider this definition: Prayer is living with and in God. So the more you are aware of where you are – in God and what you are doing in God – the more you will be praying. While intellectually we acknowledge God is in all places, we need to be aroused to that reality.

Joy is an alarm clock that awakens us as victims stricken with spiritual somnambulism, sleepwalking through a world saturated with the Divine Mystery. Those awake to that awesome reality find themselves living joyfully in an endless waterfall of gifts, and so incessantly express gratefulness to the Gift Giver. Gratitude is the prayer of prayers, the most natural and joyful. Living joyfully, however, shouldn't be interpreted

as being continuously happy. Only the naive or simple can always be cheerful. Life is bittersweet. It contains disappointments and melancholy times, but these only act as frames that enhance the beauty of the masterpiece of the joy of living that is intended for each of us by the Creator. The Garden of Eden story reveals a marvelous truth: From the very beginning we were designed to live in the joyful company of the Divine Delightful One, or, you could say, in uninterrupted prayer.

**In *Chasing Joy*, you also write, “When your core belief is your intimate unity with God that then branches off into every other religious belief, great things are possible.” Please elaborate on this statement, particularly as it relates to interfaith understanding.**

Religion is like a great towering Sequoia. Its roots go down into the subterranean prehistoric, pre-temple times, and after centuries its trunk has grown up thick, tall and sprouting countless branches, all of which reach upward to the heavens—to God. Each branch is unique and a living extension of the great tree. There are those who may find this last statement offensive, since they have been taught that their particular religion isn’t just a branch, it is the tree.

The story of creation teaches humility. It wasn’t until God had created everything, even the lowly little flea, that humans were created! In Eden’s hierarchy we’re in last place. Authentic intimacy requires humility with another person and especially with God. Love also creates humble equality, and so to be lovingly close to God is truly humbling. Superiority blinds, while humility envisions the truth that we are all one. The

various denominations within Christianity, along with the great religions of the world, all love and worship the one, same God. The God whom Muslims or Jews or Christians or any other peoples worship is the same God you worship. The names and images of God may vary richly, but the God who is named and praised in prayer is the one same Divine Mystery. When we see ourselves as lowly humans, and sinful ones at that, we too easily believe God is beyond the reach of our loving embrace. So, since intimacy with God seems impossible, we erroneously believe the only way to express love for God is by keeping the Ten Commandments.

Now a core belief is different from a dogmatic belief, such as a faith in the divinity of Christ. A core belief acts like a nuclear reactor that energizes all other beliefs. When your core belief is that you and God are intimately united as one, the implications are astonishing. For the God with whom you are united is a religionless God, a God of no religion, yet the God of all religions. Jesus came to the realization that he and God had an intimate unity, and he prayed that his disciples could also share in it: "That you may be one, as the Father and I are one." These words typically are quoted to encourage unity among his followers, but don't they also imply we should seek the same cherished oneness with God that he experienced? To achieve it, you first must believe such a close love affair with God is possible, and then you must passionately pursue it.

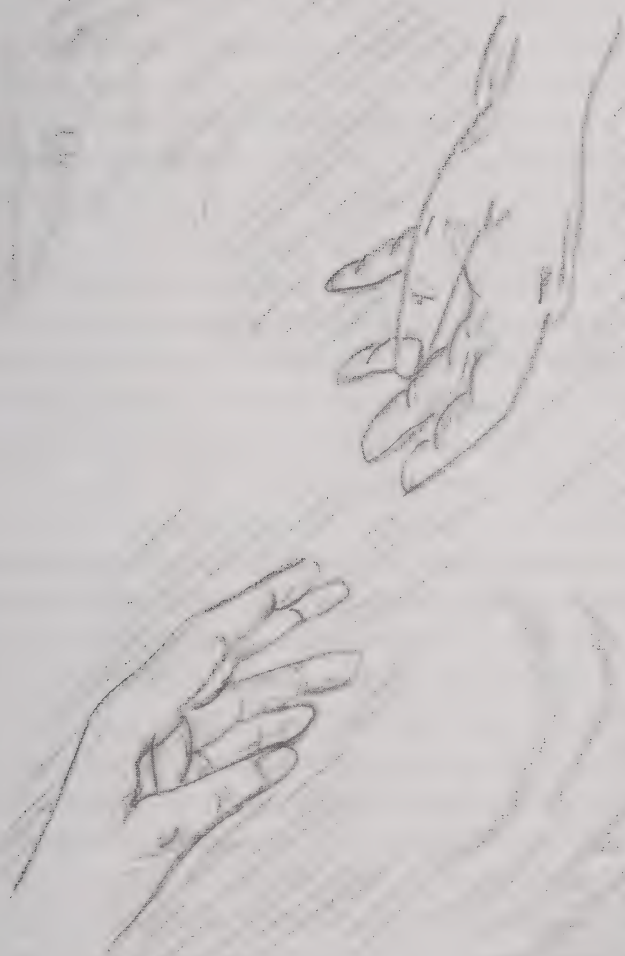
From such a personal intimate love of God great things are possible, including a sense of community with those of other religions and those of no religion—agnostics and atheists. You will also be liberated from



any obligation to convert others to your religious beliefs to insure their salvation. You'll also experience an evaporation of all competition with those of other religions. And you will feel comfortable, even at home, worshipping with those of any faith different than yours because you will perceive the difference to be inconsequential. However, not everything that flows from intimacy with God will be pleasant. You will experience personal painful distress by the disunity and bickering among religious people, especially among Christian denominations. You will suffer personally upon learning of acts of religious hatred and bigotry towards those of other religions. And, of all these, perhaps the most painful grief will be caused by those who arrogantly claim their religion is the best, the one and only true religion of God.

**A new edition of your classic work, *Pray All Ways*, was recently released. In the preface, you invite the reader "to explore how to make your life a prayer." Can you offer some concrete suggestions for those who are just beginning on this path? What hints would you give to those who need encouragement to keep going.**

I'm not surprised you asked for concrete suggestions about making your life a prayer. Americans love practical "how to" books and detailed guidelines to achieve any goal. Yet your word 'concrete' implies something rigid and solidly formed. Jesus purposely didn't give concrete suggestions about how to pray or become holy. What would have been practical two thousand years ago in ancient Palestine wouldn't be today. He desired his disciples be living vessels of his teachings; able to creatively rephrase and reinterpret them as needed, and not be parrots quoting them word for word.



He taught how to live life as a prayer/communion with God: Be kind to all, especially to your enemies and those who cause you pain. Be generous to the needy. Forgive seven times seventy times a day, and do it day after day after day. Never return an injury for an injury, impoliteness for impoliteness. Shatter the endless chain of violence and the evil of war by loving-kindness.

These are but a few of his elastic but enduring ways by which you can incorporate your love for God into your daily life. After you have transformed these into indelible habits, then open the Gospels and you will find more that you can practice. Among his challenges, the most potent and significant is to “Love God with all your heart, and all your body, mind and soul – and love others in the same way you love yourself.” To daily strive to love God and others in that way will radically transform your life and prayer, unlike any other discipline or spiritual practice.

It is an illusion to think that we have to be consciously aware that we are praying in order to be praying. It is the same as feeding or clothing Jesus in the homeless or poor. In Jesus’ parable of the Last Judgment, the divine judge gives the reward of heaven to those who fed and clothed him (importantly, without knowing it was he that they were helping). We are created in such a marvelously mystical way that we and God are intimately one in a continuous communion called life. However, to be conscious of our breathing and our praying, which are the same, can be transformational. So you may find it helpful to become more conscious by use of the short, powerfully impacting prayer, “Amen.” Say that mini-four-letter prayer after you have done the dishes, folded



the laundry, parked the car, vacuumed the house, visited a sick neighbor, attended a wake, or taken a shower. Sprinkle your daily life with one or two word prayers of your own invention to remind you that whatever it is you are doing is prayer. This isn't magical prayer; you must willfully intend to be in union with God, and perform the tasks of your life with love and a fullness of attention to what you're doing.

Hints for those in need of encouragement to continue on their spiritual quest could begin with a bit of reality. Learn to accept and embrace as natural that time is a vampire that sucks enthusiasm out of your prayer. Accept that time can become a dark magician who pulls out of its black top hat painful doubts about God and religion, and that these also are natural and normal for those on the spiritual quest. Loving God is the same as loving anyone; as love ages it grows lackluster, even monotonous. Love of God and of another requires constant re-romancing, creatively expressing your love in new ways, and frequently adding a dash of the rich spice of change to the relationship.

Holidays, vacations from your usual spiritual exercises, work wonders. Religious practice relies on repetitive acts that easily become routine instead of being romantic encounters with the Divine Lover. A final suggestion: dare to call down the zesty Spirit of Creativity into your life and into your prayer. I say "dare," since the vast majority of us are all too comfortable with our lives just as they are. We don't want anyone, even the Spirit of God, descending into our well-ordered routines like a tornado. But be daring, and be pleasantly surprised.

**Can you talk a little further about the connection between prayer and what you call “compassionate service”?**

Those who volunteer and are full-time ministers of service to others must respond to those they serve with a heart not simply full, but overflowing. That is, if they desire their actions to be grace-filled. Each hour of service depletes the fountain of the heart unless it is daily or frequently replenished. Jesus, who was constantly giving himself away in loving service to others, frequently disappeared! He absented himself from being available to service in order to be alone in prayer in the wilderness. He drew apart from others and those in need not for the luxury of solitude. He did so to pray, to return to the Source and drink from the bottomless spring so he could return to serving others with an overflowing heart.

A friend wrote to me about a Buddhist practice called *Tonglen* in which one takes into oneself the suffering of others, and gives back to them compassion. Buddhists believe this practice allows one to be connected with all beings. Notice the encompassing “all,” which includes animals, birds and other beings of creation. This spiritual practice of *Tonglen* requires a receptive opening up of our vulnerable selves that can seem a violation of our primal self-preservation and protection from being injured. Essential to this practice is becoming vulnerable emotionally, not intellectually, to experience personally the painful suffering of other beings. As you take in their suffering like great gulps of oxygen, you simultaneously give back loving compassion, a desire to intentionally enter into a communion of suffering.

Paradoxically, this communion with those who are suffering is truly a Holy Communion; it intimately connects you with all beings and with the Divine Mystery present in each and everyone. For any act of service to be redemptive and compassionate, the prayer of reconnecting with the Source of all grace is essential. Today we are overcommitted, always in a hurry, with no time to waste in our day. Don't be hoodwinked into thinking that a "quickie" moment of prayer at the beginning or in the middle of your day will replenish an empty heart depleted by empathetic service to others. Practice the habit of the Teacher of Galilee by sneaking away, stealing time to be alone in solitude and prayer long enough to sufficiently fill your heart to overflowing.

**How did you come to learn the effectiveness of using stories and parables, as well as creative illustrations in your writings? What would you recommend others do to tap this resource in themselves?**

The answer to the first part of your question is a result of having to listen to mind-numbing teachers and preachers who bored me to death. What I didn't find boring was listening to stories that were attention grabbing, and so I began using them in public speaking and teaching. The magnetic power of stories may be coded in our DNA since we're prehistorically conditioned to learn by means of stories and parables.

Before there were books, wisdom was taught by listening to legends and myths. Illiterate parents, and wise ones today, instructed their children with stories and tales containing moral and useful life lessons. Our primitive



fascination, if not addiction, to stories is also shown by how we dream. Specialists say when we dream, the mind sorts and stores away our memories, but this task is always done by means of bizarre narratives, stories in which we are the main character. For all these reasons, Jesus didn't preach—he told stories. His parables concluded with unexpected endings that left those who heard them with questions about their meaning, and that as a good storyteller he didn't answer. Today, of all his words, we remember best his parable lessons.

The answer to the second part of your question about why I use creative illustrations is that they are akin to parables; they say vastly more than any discord in prose. This is so because the brain grasps an image fifty per cent faster than the written word; i.e., a road sign of a leaping deer alerts a driver far more quickly to that danger than a worded warning. The printed word used today first began as pictures. Egyptian hieroglyphics were pictures. An example is our letter "E." This first letter in my name, Edward, appeared first in Egypt as a hieroglyphic picture of a stick man with arms raised up shouting in glee—so E was a sign for joy. As Phoenicians adapted this sign, and then the Greeks, it was reshaped to resemble a trident fork on its side. The Romans finally created the present upright shaped letter E. I hope whenever you see the letter "E" it will cause you to a smile, a brief burst of joy.

It takes our brains longer to decode the imageless letters of our alphabet into words, and then concepts, than it does to grasp the meaning of a picture. And the impact of these drab coded signs on the brain isn't as vivid as pictures. Images not only say more than words, they are easier to grasp. In writing, I try to employ images either as actual illustrations or attempt to write

using words as a brush to paint pictures of what I want to say. The more picturesque are the words, the more captivated is the mind.

Now to your last question about what I recommend to those wishing to tap into this resource within themselves. First, banish to outer Siberia those self-defeating words, "I'm not an artist!" Never yet in my life, and it has been a long one, have I ever seen a small child who wasn't an artist and who didn't love to draw and create original pictures! That talent, like sleeping beauty, is dormant in each one of us, so awaken it with an uncritical, nonjudgmental love of whatever you attempt to draw.

And if you are adamant about not even trying to draw anything, remember you have a tongue. Use it artistically. In speaking we tend to be slothfully lazy, and so suffer from a skinny vocabulary of constantly using the same words and phrases since they come effortlessly to our lips. Discipline yourself to use new, fresh words and creative picturesque phrases. Whenever you speak, write a letter or express anything, involve your God-given gift of creativity. Use hieroglyphic-descriptive words: talk/write/think in pictures, in moving Technicolor pictures. Be patient, and with practice, I assure you, your efforts will be rewarded with a delightful and holy hieroglyphic habit.

# ILLUMINATIONS



It is not in our power to force the beyond to become here; but we can transport the here into the beyond.

*~ Abraham Joshua Heschel*

Here in this body are the sacred rivers: here are the sun and moon, as well as all the pilgrimage places. I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body.

*~ Mahasidda Saraha*

Beauty takes us beyond the visible to the height of consciousness, past the ordinary to the mystical, away from the expedient to the endlessly true.

*~ Joan Chittister*

The nature of love is as the nature of water in the depth of the earth. If we do not dig deep enough, we find mud, not water; but when we dig deep, we find pure water.

*~ Hazrat Inayat Khan*

This work of ours toward a new heaven and a new earth shows a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and, of course, recognizes the primacy of the spiritual. Food for body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.

*~ Dorothy Day*



We are in touch with the highest spirit in ourselves, we too are a Buddha, filled with the Holy Spirit, and we become very tolerant, very open, very deep, and very understanding.

~ *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Make it a rule . . . never to lie down at night without being able to say , "I have made one human being at least a little wiser, a little happier or a little better this day."

~ *Charles Kingsley*

Learn to love Divinity in everything-- everything—you do. Little by little, convert your entire earthly existence into an inner mood of constant worship.

~ *Jack Hawley*

Essential Wisdom of the  
Bhagavad Gita

A true personal encounter brings us not only knowledge of another, fellowship with another, but also a deeper comprehension of our inner self."

~ *Thomas Merton*

Silence is the beautiful fruit of prayer. We must learn not only the silence of the mouth, but also the silence of the heart, of the eyes, of the ears and of the mind, which I call the five silences. Say it and memorize it on your five fingers.

~ *Mother Teresa*

When you stand in prayer and feel that no other joy can be compared to it, then you have indeed discovered true prayer.

~ *Evagrius Ponticus*

# A REFLECTION



## In/sight

*Terri MacKenzie*

Sitting spellbound on a log,  
I watch eerie sage and lime lights  
silhouette the North Woods  
on a luminescent canvas of night.  
I picture veiled, bronze-green goddesses  
waving seaweed to scatter the stars.  
I join their swirling, dazzling dance  
and bond with every child who ever chose,  
like me, to fling her arms and twirl her joy  
among these shining shadows,  
to seek, behind the undulating screen,  
some source of this magical scene.

That heavenly romp returns at will,  
and I ponder, now, those moments  
and how they've grown in me.  
I've learned that everything  
funneled through receptive eyes  
reveals as well as screens; I know  
creation wraps in radiant unity

*Terri MacKenzie seeks the Source as a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ). Her Earth-related ministries are rooted in the SHCJ mission "To help others to believe that God lives and acts in them, and in our world, and to rejoice in the divine presence."*



youth of every species:  
toddlers, goslings, seedlings, minnows . . . ;  
and though within and beyond are where  
I always find the Source,  
seeking it remains  
the most defining venture of my life.

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



## Cheshbon Nefesh: Self-Examination

*Annie Tucker*



The Chasidic master, the Magid of Dubnow, tells the story of an unfortunate village which was often plagued by fire. Whenever a new blaze developed, all the townspeople would drop everything they were doing and band together to carry water from the well to put out the flames. Once, when one of the villagers came to the big city, he suddenly heard bells ringing and horns blowing. "What is that noise?" he asked. "Whenever there is a fire, we ring the bells and blow the horns to put out the blaze," came the reply. When he returned home, the villager told his neighbors all he had learned in the big city. "How incredible," they said at once. "From now on, whenever there is a fire in our village, we too will blow horns and ring bells in order to put out the flames!"

The next time there was a fire, the town elders started blowing their horns and ringing their bells. But the fire

*Rabbi Annie Tucker graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pennsylvania and received a master's degree in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary where she was ordained in May 2006. A Wexner Graduate Fellow she currently serves as Assistant Rabbi of The Jewish Center, a large Conservative congregation in Princeton, NJ.*



only got worse. Before long, half the village was gone. When the villager returned to the big city, he was furious. “Why is it that when we rang the bell, the fire didn’t go out?” he demanded. The city folk replied, “Do you really think that bells and horns put out blazes? They only alert people that there is a fire! Rather, it is up to each one of us to extinguish the flames. There is only so much that a little horn can do.”

“It is the same,” said the Magid of Dubnow, “with the sounding of the shofar (the ram’s horn blown by the Jewish community during the High Holiday season). The shofar’s blasts are a wake-up call, alerting us to repent and better our ways. Now it is up to us to pray sincerely and make the proper New Year’s resolutions. Only then, will we bring ourselves closer to God.”

On August 31<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, the Jewish community will mark Rosh Hodesh Elul, the beginning of the month immediately prior to Rosh Hashanah, one of the holiest days of the Jewish calendar. Elul ushers in the High Holiday season, reminding us to begin preparing for the upcoming Yamin Noraim (High Holidays) and urging us towards the *cheshbon nefesh*, or self-examination, that is so central to the High Holiday season. Every morning during the month of Elul we blow the shofar, alerting ourselves—as the Magid of Dubnow so eloquently states—that the time for repentance is upon us. During the month of Elul we also recite Psalm 27 every morning and evening, emphasizing our desire to live a life filled with God’s presence. Elul is the warm-up session before the High Holidays begin in earnest, a time to organize our inner lives and craft our goals for the coming year so that we can take full advantage of the periods of prayer and introspection offered by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If we begin

our reflection only once the holidays are upon us, we have missed out on a powerful opportunity. Preparation for the Yamim Noraim must begin weeks in advance!

The late summer, with its anticipation of fall's new beginnings, offers all of us—regardless of faith tradition—a wonderful opportunity to begin the important process of *chesbon nefesh* described above, and to help start off this process I offer the following prompts. Discuss these questions with your spouse or children; write down the answers and bring them with you to your house of worship; meditate on them when the words of your prayer-book seem insufficient; or put them in a private place and look at them again next year at this time. Read them every Shabbat or talk about them with a trusted friend.

Write them in your journal; think about them when you're at the gym; carve out an hour to sit quietly and ruminate about them over a cup of tea. Abandon them entirely and come up with your own way of starting to prepare for this season of new beginnings. Look for your own personal shofar—the alarm bell that inspires your soul towards prayer and self-examination.

Wishing all of us a season of great contemplation and reflection!

## QUESTIONS FOR ELUL

1. What have been the happiest and most gratifying parts of this past year? In what areas have I acted as my best self? Which of my current habits or behaviors do I want to bring with me into the coming year?
2. What have been the most painful or difficult moments of the past year? When have been the times that I have not acted as I would have hoped? Which of my current habits or behaviors would I like to modify or leave behind in the year to come?
3. What are the relationships in my life of which I am most proud? The ones that feel most painful? What would it take to create change in these relationships in the coming year? Who are the people that I most need to ask for forgiveness?
4. What does my relationship to my faith tradition look like? My relationship to God? Is there one new religious behavior that I would like to take on in the coming year? Is there one new element of my faith that I would like to study or explore?
5. What does my relationship with myself look like? How do I balance my own needs with the needs of those closest to me? What are the things that I currently do to take care of my physical, emotional, and spiritual health? Are there things I could do to feel more nourished and well cared for?

*The greatest of all miracles is that we need not be tomorrow  
what we are today, but that we can improve if we make use of the  
potentials implanted in us by God. ~ Samuel M. Silver*

## Rabbi Samuel M. Silver

(1912-2008)

Teacher, author, and radio figure, Rabbi Samuel Silver had a deep faith in God and a great love for humanity. The warmth and sense of humor that characterized his interactions left those whose lives he touched happier, wiser, and more compassionate. Fellowship in Prayer was blessed by his friendship and service as a contributing writer and trustee for more than four decades. He will be greatly missed by all those who have known him and benefited from his joyful presence. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Elaine, his four sons, fourteen grandchildren and the members of his Congregation L'dor Va-dor in Lake Worth, FL. Shalom!



*Only as death is faced can rebirth happen.  
Only as rebirth shapes and shakes us  
can love be born again. ~ Joseph C. Williamson*

Rev. Dr. Joseph C. Williamson  
(1933-2008)

Compassionate author, scholar, and preacher, Rev. Williamson blended the prophetic with the pragmatic, modeling authentic justice and love. His life's work focused on understanding the intersection of religion with politics, encouraging people to advocate for the marginalized and dispossessed in society and culture. While Williamson was Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel at Princeton University, he also served on the Board of Trustees for Fellowship in Prayer. The world has lost a great visionary and leader, and to those who knew him, a wonderful colleague and friend. To his wife, Rev. Donna DiSciullo, we send our deepest sympathy and heartfelt prayers.

# P R A Y E R S



## Don't Give Up

Listen closely and you can hear them . . .  
the great spirits of every tribe  
the ones who were here before us  
Listen to what they are saying  
There is one who calls himself Gandhi  
and another who calls himself King  
They know that the way is not easy  
There is a woman named Teresa  
and many who are simply known as  
Grandmothers and Grandfathers  
and all of them whisper into our ears,  
'Don't give up,' they tell us,  
'Don't become cynical—  
Take one more step—  
There is a reason.'

~ Ron Atchison

*Ron Atchison is creator and developer of 'Inspiration Peak,' home to some of the world's most beautiful quotes, poems and short stories. <http://www.inspirationpeak.com>*

## Blind Eyes

God, give me eyes  
That cannot see as the world sees  
But as You see.  
I don't want to see the strange looks  
But what is in the heart.  
I don't want to see the ugliness displayed  
But the beauty that hides within.  
Help me to see as You see.

~ Barbara Aldrich

## God

Mystery, Paradox, Unknowable  
Language tries to capture Your Essence  
But it is impossible  
I get a glimpse, a flash of recognition  
Ah! Yes! Yes!  
No words, just a moment of knowing  
Truth  
It is enough—and yet I want more.

~ Linda Longo-Lockspeiser

*Barbara Aldrich resides in rural Nevada. She is the mother of six children and three step children. She serves as a volunteer E.M.T. and publishes an online newsletter for her community.*

*Linda Longo-Lockspeiser is a licensed clinical social worker, spiritual director and teacher specializing in family violence. She facilitates support groups for hospice workers. She is the mother of four and resides in New York.*

## Metta Karuna Prayer

Oneness of Life and Light  
Entrusting in your Great Compassion,  
May you shed the foolishness in myself,  
Transforming me into a conduit of Love.  
May I be a medicine for the sick and weary,  
Nursing their afflictions until they are cured;  
May I become food and drink,  
During time of famine,  
May I protect the helpless and the poor,  
May I be a lamp,  
For those who need your Light,  
May I be a bed for those who need rest,  
and guide all seekers to the Other Shore.  
May all find happiness through my actions,  
and let no one suffer because of me.  
Whether they love or hate me,  
Whether they hurt or wrong me,  
May they all realize true entrusting,  
Through Other Power,  
and realize Supreme Nirvana.

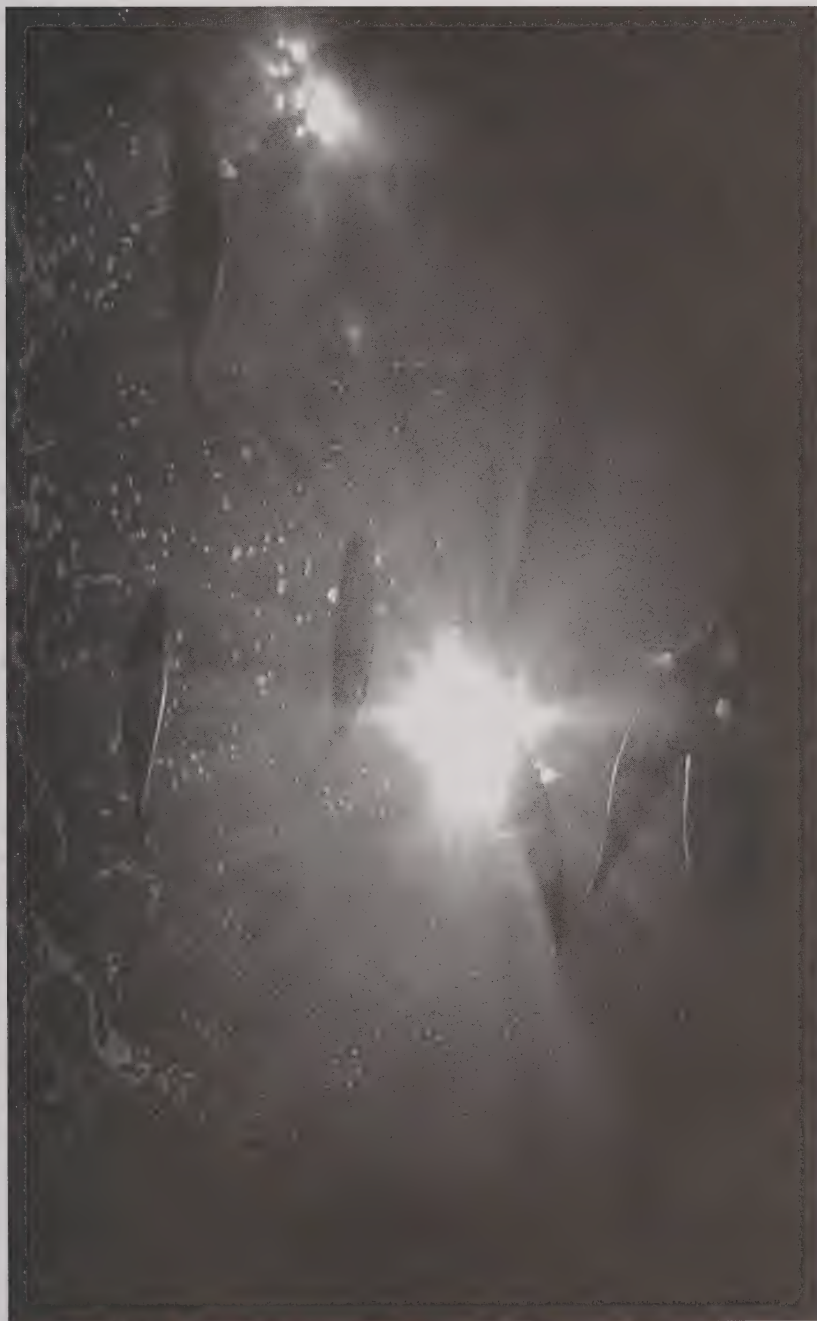
*~ Traditional Shin  
Buddhist Prayer*

## Farewell

Returning thanks for life,  
I turn back and bow eastward.

*~ Goshi  
Japanese Haiku poet*





# In Solitude and Solidarity: When Taizé Worship Meets the World

*Amy McDougall*



Silence, stillness, and simplicity are the words Brenda Bellamy uses to describe Taizé-style worship.

And she would know. Not only is she partly responsible for the preparation of the weekly service held at downtown Seattle's St. James Cathedral, but she has also served a total of eighteen months in different volunteer roles at the very birthplace of this nearly sixty-year-old contemplative tradition—a monastic community in the remote village of Taizé, France.

"It's about listening together, praying together, and singing together," she said on the steps of St. James on a recent misty Pacific Northwest evening, minutes before roughly sixty people—young and old—gathered in the grand cathedral behind us.

Inside, the stage was set. A group of votive candles scattered on the floor around the altar fore-grounded the

*Amy McDougall is a writer, editor and educator living in Seattle, Washington. She recently earned her M.A. in English from Washington State University. She hopes to visit Taizé, France someday soon!*

broader hallowed scene. Their light cast twinkling shadows on the centrally placed, hand-painted, red and gold icon of the crucifixion, while to the right, a light bulb attached to a music stand caused the face of the man playing classical guitar behind it to take on a faint glow. The sanctuary's only natural light—aside from the rainbow-filtered glimmer of the surrounding stain glass windows—came from the ceiling's circular skylight, or oculus, high above the altar. Some sat with friends or family, while others sat in solitude. At some point from my tenth row pew, I noticed I was breathing a bit slower, deeper. How could I not? This was a house of peace.

For the next hour or so, two voices from the back balcony—one male, one female—led us in chants of praise, reflection, and supplication in English, Latin, and Spanish, pausing only for a Bible verse reading and a five-minute period of complete silence.

"I'll do just about anything to protect that time of silence," Bellamy told me, stressing the rarity of such opportunities for uninterrupted communal and inner calm.

But Taizé worship isn't just about inward meditation and individual enlightenment. It is also a collective call to look outward and reach beyond church walls—to be involved in the world.

With roots tracing back to a Swiss Protestant named Brother Roger Schutz, the Taizé Community was sparked by one man's act of compassion. In 1940, Brother Roger safeguarded Jewish refugees from German troops by hiding them in his home in France. Beginning in the 1950s, his activist spirit attracted a community of Catholic and Protestant brothers from various countries who wanted to commit their lives to common prayer, simplicity, celibacy, and service. Today, more than one

hundred brothers from more than twenty-five countries extend hospitality to thousands of youth groups and travelers from around the world who partake in long and short-term stays there. Basic meals, housing, and three services of common prayer are offered daily. And in smaller reflection groups, participants seek clarity about vocational decisions and ponder larger spiritual questions together. During Bellamy's visits to Taizé, her responsibilities have included facilitating small groups, welcoming new visitors, cleaning restrooms, and managing the on-site nonprofit store. The ongoing routines and roles seem to be a direct response to Brother Roger's plea to be a "parable of community."





But the founder's vision can only live on in the spirit of others now. At the age of 90, Brother Roger's life came to a tragic end in August 2005, when a guest with a history of mental illness murdered him during a worship service. The reason he was targeted is still a mystery, as he was known for his life of global peace work, which he called a "pilgrimage of trust on earth." He had written two books with Mother Teresa, lobbied at the United Nations, and was awarded the 1988 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education. His work perseveres through the monastic community, where his brothers hold international, ecumenical youth meetings to share their hope of being "a sign of reconciliation between divided Christians and separated peoples."

For Bellamy, that sense of inclusiveness is what drew her to the practice of ecumenism in the first place. While living in Germany for a year, she noticed a blurb in the local newspaper about a church youth group heading to Poland for an experience in common prayer. Immediately intrigued, she signed up and joined them on their journey. That was thirteen years ago.

"It was the most life-changing event in my life," said Bellamy, who has worked as a church worship leader and began working as a sacristan at St. James last year.

"It's not a movement, there's no sign-up list," she said about Taizé, distinguishing it from more contemporary evangelical groups that go to great lengths to increase numbers and make a life of faith look more appealing and stylish to younger generations. "You're not morphed into a common identity," she continued. "You can experience it in whatever way you like . . . You can pray and live together across all kinds of bridges."

And within this tradition's context, a bridge reference isn't just a pleasant-sounding metaphor or an abstract goal. Taize has a multilingual history and a multinational presence. In a recent meeting held in Calcutta, India, the community's current leader, Brother Alois, expressed sentiment that fuels this global group identity when he said, "All humanity forms a single family and God lives within every human being without exception."

But as with any organized group, Taize worship can look and sound very different from country-to-country

*Silence,  
Stillness,  
and  
Simplicity*

and parish-to-parish. Thus, while Bellamy can pinpoint some key underlying commonalities to Taize worship across the globe—silence, stillness, and simplicity—she said it is impossible to encapsulate its many manifestations. For one, the monastery in France uses multilingual songbooks, which sets it apart from most U.S. sites

where English is the dominant language. With upwards of twenty languages spoken in the community at any given time, Bellamy's initial response during her first stint there is understandable. As the only native English speaker among the volunteers, she realized, "Wow, God speaks all these languages!"

But at a place like St. James, the planning team is reminded of Brother Roger's goal to keep the songs and prayers accessible to all. Hence, they rarely stray from choosing English, Latin, and Spanish versions of the chants.

Other noticeable differences: Here, a booming pipe organ and classical guitar accompany the singing; at the French monastery, they stick with a sole guitar and occasional classical instruments. Here, rows of church

pews fill the room; there, the brothers sit on low wooden stools while most of the visitors sit or lie on the floor. Here, five minutes of silence is honored; there, it's ten. Here, a weekly prayer service is held; there, they meet three times each day.

But perhaps those are mere details, not to be overshadowed by the greater common vision and virtues of Taizé that transcend boundaries. After all, the invitation to spread seeds of justice and peace wherever you reside is an easily translatable—and much needed—message in our world today. And Bellamy would agree. “Ultimately, it’s not about Taizé itself,” she said. “It’s just about all kinds of people coming together, strengthening and sharing our prayer lives, and then being encouraged to go home and be church where we live.”

# Christo

*Susan Gregg-Schroeder*



There is a famous image in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which I had heard about but which I “experienced” while visiting my daughter in that city. The large statue of Christ the Redeemer, better known as “Christo,” looms 710 meters above the city. In Brazil, as in many Latin American countries, there is a great distinction between the wealthy and the poor. Yet Christ stands, with hands outstretched to embrace all people.

In preparing for my trip to Brazil, my daughter informed me that it was summertime. So I left my umbrella at home and brought two bathing suits instead! But, putting the blame on El Nino, it rained almost the whole time I was there. From my daughter’s apartment, I would look up at the hill toward Christo. Most of the time Christo was surrounded by clouds as the skies darkened with impending rain. But I knew Christo was there, and that when the darkness had passed, Christo would emerge in the sunlight as a symbol of hope, inclusivity and unconditional love.

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Sometimes when we look up into the skies on a cloudy, overcast night, we can't see the stars. We know they are shining with the same intensity, only our vision of them has been obscured. In the same way, there are those dark times in our lives when we cannot feel the Creator's love and outstretched arms. But just as Christ is always there ready to embrace and accept us just as we are, we live in faith that there will be signs of the Creator's love breaking through our personal darkness.

It is ironic that my daughter and I took the tram up to see Christ during the one day when there were a few hours of sunlight. I was so awed by this image that I took a whole roll of film. I was looking forward to getting my prints back, but was devastated to find that I had inadvertently double-exposed the roll. And so, all my pictures of this magnificent statue are superposed with pictures I had taken of the countryside, a waterfall in the rain forest, the downtown *Centro* district and the *favelas* or slum areas.

While double-exposing those pictures was a mistake, I found that they only enhanced my own experience of Christ the Redeemer who watches over the wealthy, the poor, the city, the country and Brazil's natural beauty. For me, that became an epiphany experience . . . a sign, a manifestation, a revelation of God's love and acceptance of the whole world.

# P O E T R Y



## Without Shadows

Strong angels  
Without concessions  
For mercy  
Burden the evil,  
Brandishing swords  
Bound for justice.

Anxious voices  
Broad with hope  
Find favor  
With morning  
Offering praise  
To days end.

Faith streams long  
Deep from rivers  
Where prayers flow  
Tumbling full  
Into the light  
Without shadows.

~ Roger Singer

*Roger Singer, who has maintained a chiropractic practice for over 30 years, has served on Legislative and Practice Management committees for the American Chiropractic Association and lectured at colleges in the US, Canada and Australia. He has four grown children.*

## Wishes for My Grandchildren

*Then David took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the river, and put them in his shepherd's bag....and he drew near to the Philistine.*

*1 Samuel 17-18*

May you aspire to be holy trouble-makers,  
distrusting bureaucracies,  
confounding the doctrinaire.

May your hungers call you  
to compassion,  
your questions to humility,

May you nurture the living  
and bury the dead,  
may sturdy books guard your prayers

and the stones in your pocket  
remind you  
that the rivers you walk in

are the rivers you will become.

*~ Michael S. Glaser*

*Michael S. Glaser served at St. Mary's College of Maryland as both a professor and administrator for over thirty-five years. Glaser has been honored for his teaching and poetry. He was named Poet Laureate of Maryland in 2004.*

# The Pashmina Shawl

*Meredith Jordan*



I was in Marblehead, Massachusetts one Sunday for a bridal shower intended to honor the lovely young woman chosen by my beautiful son to be his life partner. My daughter and I stopped first at their tiny-but-lovely condo just off Salem Common to drop off Tashi, the pup who loves Josh, and was invited to spend the afternoon of the shower with him and his father as they wired a row of track lights to the kitchen ceiling.

There was a kind of happy chaos in this small (700 square feet) space, peopled by Josh's father, stepmother, mother and sister . . . as well as Sophie, the cautious cat and Tashi, the exuberant pup. Tashi and Sophie were circling each other in a dance each was trying to define. Tashi wanted to play, and Sophie wanted nothing more than to be left alone by this strange mop-like creature. No hissing as the last time they met, and only a small pleading whine from the pup. But, still—it was chaos.

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Into this chaos, the cell phone rang and my son went off into another room to hear the call. I watched in some confusion as he came back into the kitchen and—without a word—took out the ironing board and iron, set them up in the middle of all the people, animals and electrical equipment, and went in search of something. Still not telling anyone what he was doing, he came out of the bedroom a minute later with a badly wrinkled pashmina shawl.

He brought it to me and quietly asked, “Mom, what kind of material would you say this is?” I made a wild guess, and he went to the iron, set it appropriately and began to iron the shawl—perfectly, I might add—for his sweetheart to wear to her bridal shower. When he was done, he folded it carefully and placed it out of reach of the still-wild puppy.

Now this is an image to warm a modern mother’s heart: her son ironing his soon-to-be-wife’s shawl. Good going, Josh! But that isn’t what struck me most in this quiet moment that almost no one noticed but me. It was the spirit of his attention to detail, the way he wanted everything to be just right for her on this day-of-days. It was the kindness that doesn’t announce itself, ask for help, or expect appreciation. He just did it because he loves her.

Such a simple act of emotional and spiritual generosity. What a great heart this young man has! And what a pleasure to be his mom on the day they begin the first of many celebrations of their new life together. In this singular moment, I saw reflected back to me the thousands of hours when a mother (any parent, really) infuses love into the heart of a child so that child, when grown, has a full heart to give when a mate calls for help. I also saw

the uniqueness of “Josh,” a man who is fortuitously my son, with all the strengths culled from his own life lessons. When called, he answers. Always has. That part belongs to him and has nothing to do with how much he was loved, which was (and is) hugely.

The day was gorgeous, the boats in full sail across Marblehead Neck, the flowers and food lovely, the people fun and funny. It could not have been a more wonderful party. Josh arrived later and even opened a few gifts himself, but the real gift of the day was mine: the sight of my boy, now a man beginning a happy new phase of his life with Lexi, standing at that ironing board, quietly making the day a good one for his beloved.

That attention to detail, that kindness, that graciousness is sometimes all we need to grease the wheels of our more difficult, stressful or painful times. Perhaps the best way to invite such a gift of love is to offer it generously with no expectation of return on our investment. I have no doubt there are many times when Lexi shows up for Josh when he needs help in his turn.

This will be a good marriage, of that I’m sure. And my certainty comes because of the moment Lexi stepped into the party wrapped in her beautiful pashmina shawl.

# Putting Others First

*Eknath Easwaran*



My Grandmother was a remarkable woman. We come from a tradition that has been matriarchal for centuries, and within our large extended family—over a hundred people—Granny had weighty responsibilities. She liked to get up before dawn, long before the heat of the tropical sun became oppressive, and though I don't remember her doing anything just for herself, she would work throughout the day. Self-reliant, afraid of nothing, she stood steady as a pillar when a crisis arose—a death in the family, for instance, or a failure in the crops. In worship, in work, she set an example for everyone.

But Granny knew how to play, too. She could throw off her years and join the children at their games—and not just the girls either; she played hard with the boys at tag and ball, and usually got the better of us. During a particular annual festival, she liked to stand up on the bamboo and palm swing we had fashioned in the courtyard, single out one of the strongest boys, and say, "Push me as high as you can!" And up, up she would go in prodigious

*Eknath Easwaran (1910-1999) was respected around the world as a teacher of meditation and an authentic guide to timeless wisdom. His method was a dogma-free approach that brought universal ideals into daily life. Excerpted from Passage Meditation, © 2008 Nilgiri Press, and used with permission. [www.nilgiriexpress.org](http://www.nilgiriexpress.org).*

arcs, wood groaning from the strain, while the women gasped and we boys stared in admiration below.

Granny possessed a great secret: she knew how to put others first. If she bothered to think about her own needs, it was only after everyone else had been taken care of. I think especially of little things that mean so much to a child. On school days, she always prepared something special for my lunch—a favorite dish, a treat—and I would run all the way home to be with her. “Here comes the Malabar Express!” she would say. Then, though it wasn’t her own lunch time, she would sit next to me and keep me company as I ate. One of the village priests called her “Big Mother”—I imagine because she nurtured and sustained us so well.

At one point, when I developed some illness or other, the local doctor prescribed a saltless diet for a year. Three hundred and sixty-five days without salt! I cannot convey to you what a sentence that was. In a tropical country where salt figures into almost every dish . . . well, my school friends said, “Why don’t you just throw yourself into the river?”

The day after the order had been given, I came to breakfast with a long, long face. “What’s the use?” I said, staring down at my plate. Everyone gave me a look of commiseration. But what could they do? They felt helpless.

But not Granny. Serving me, she said quietly, “I am going on a saltless diet for a year too.” I don’t think I have ever had a better breakfast.

I said Granny possessed a great secret, but that wasn’t because she hid anything. The sad truth is that most people do not want this knowledge—chiefly, I think, because they fail to see the joy it brings, the sense of freedom.



One day I came home after school with something deeply disturbing on my mind: I had seen for the first time, a child with elephantiasis. It is a terrifying disease, one that we are fortunately free of in this country. This little boy's legs had swollen badly. He walked only with great effort and of course he was unable to join in our games. I told my grandmother about him. "Granny, it must be awful for that boy to have elephantiasis and not to play."

Her face became very compassionate. She said, "Yes, everything in life will be hard for him." Then she added, "But only one in a million suffers from elephantiasis of the leg. There is a much more dreadful disease that can afflict every one of us if we don't guard ourselves against it all the time."

"What's that Granny?"

"Elephantiasis of the ego."

The more I have pondered that remark down the years, the more perceptive it seems. Our swollen concern for ourselves, she was saying, constitutes the worst threat in life. And the teachings of every religion bear her out. Repeatedly, we are told that ego or self-will, our drive to be separate from the wholeness of creation, is the source of all our suffering. It keeps us from accepting others, from sympathy and quick understanding. More than that, it alienates us from the supreme reality we call God. It alone prevents us from knowing that, as Meher Baba put it, "You and I are not 'we' you and I are one."

When my grandmother told me about elephantiasis of the ego, I remember I asked her whether there was any cure for this malady. "Oh, yes," she said. "Love of God."

Love of God? Some may say it was natural that Granny would use those words, with her devotional Hindu background. You might even hear them among a few pious people in the West. But what can they possibly mean to us? If the materialistic bent of our culture has not banished such devotion, our intellectual training has. How can we conceivably have a fervent love of God in our times? It is a good question, and I think there is a practical answer to it.

First, we need to ask what we mean by "love." The term has been used so shamelessly in connection with

What does	all kinds of things—soft drinks,
love	paper towels, garage door openers.
mean to	And love between a man and a
you?	woman, we are told, means a
	muscular, tanned fellow running
	hand in hand through the surf with
	a stunning, billowy-haired girl, or

couples sitting across glasses of wine at a little hideaway restaurant. From such imagery we draw our romantic notions of love.

But listen to Saint Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, nor quick to take offense. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over others' sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance. Love will never come to an end.

That is a love worthy of us. That is a love powerful enough to dissolve our self-will.

When Jesus urged us to love God, he added also "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The two interconnect. The Lord is present in every one of us, and when we love those around us, we are loving him. The Hindu scriptures put it memorably:

When a man loves his wife more than himself, he is loving the Lord in her. When a woman loves her husband more than herself, she is loving the Lord in him. When parents love their children more than themselves, they are loving the Lord in them.

I once spoke to a group of high school girls at a luncheon in Minneapolis. After my talk I answered questions, and the girl who presided asked, "You've used the word *love* many times. What does love mean to you?" I gave her the same answer: "When your boyfriend's welfare means more to you than your own, you are in love." This girl turned to the rest of the gathering and said candidly: "Well, I guess none of us has ever been in love."

I think that can be said for most people. But we can *learn* to be in love. The spiritual life is marvelously fair: it is open to everybody. No favoritism, no hereditary class. No matter where you start, you can learn everything you need to learn, provided you are prepared to work at it. So too of love. Any one of us may be very self-willed now, but why should we be depressed about it? We can begin the work of eradicating our self-will, and the easiest and most natural way is by putting the welfare of those around us first.

# END PIECE



## On the Journey Towards Becoming a Peacemaker

*Albert M. Lewis*

What if God were to speak to us now; to give us a fresh look at what's real, true, and the core of our world? Might God say, "Be just, be kind, care, share, give, take, love, laugh, cry, feel the pain, and dance in the time of joy?" And what would we hear? Would it be what we want to hear, or what was said? Could we each hear in our own way? Must we all be of the same mind? Must the one who hears at twelve feet fight with the one who hears at twelve yards? Will the black one and the white one and the child of the land all know God in the same way? And if not, will they then fight?

What if God said, "I grant you a gift: a world full of peace, health, and food for all. I give you a time, now, when each may sit by his vine and by her fig tree and none will cause you fear?" Would we heed the words? If God came to each of us in a dream, would we hold the dream in our hearts and souls, or would we cast it off as just a dream? What would it take to look deep within, where we live and know truth, and there to find the one God, who cries for us and waits and hopes and says, "I am here. Do not fear. Live, love, talk, and walk hand in hand with me. Let no child learn war anymore, but let each bring what is right and just in his home and in her land!"

*Rabbi Albert M. Lewis is the Director of the Emeritus College at Aquinas, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a weekly columnist for The Grand Rapids Press.*



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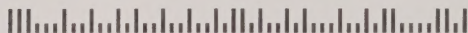
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